

Two killed, 24 injured in Tangail pile-up

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Tangail

Two persons were killed and 24 were injured in a collision involving four vehicles on Dhaka-Tangail highway in Tangail's Mirzapur upazila yesterday.

The accident occurred in Kurni area around 5:00am.

Mollah Tutul, officer-in-charge of Gorai Highway Police Station, said a Dhaka-bound bus hit a parked sand-laden truck from behind, leaving a bus passenger -- Ratan Chandra Bormon (25) of Kurigram's Ulipur -- dead on the spot and injuring 20.

During the collision, a dump truck behind the bus had to hit the brake hard to stop. As a result, a pickup behind the truck collided with it, seriously injuring four. The pickup driver -- Bibek (23) -- died in the collision.

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The accident on Dhaka-Tangail highway left the bus in a mangled condition, with the front part completely destroyed. The aftermath of the collision led to a tailback stretching for several kilometres for one hour.

PHOTO: STAR

'No reason to worry'

Momen says global food crisis won't seriously harm Bangladesh

UNB, Sylhet

Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen yesterday said the government can ensure food security in the country despite the fear of a global food crisis.

"Though there is a fear that a global food crisis might be seen in the future because of the Covid-19 pandemic and Russia-Ukraine situation, it will not harm Bangladesh much," he said.

The foreign minister made the remarks responding to a question from journalists after he inaugurated the works for upgrading the Ambarkhana-Tukerbazar part of Sylhet-Sunamganj road into a four-lane one.

He said not a single inch of arable land in Bangladesh will remain uncultivated as the government is trying to ensure food security. "If you can manage food, you can manage anything else."

He said the GDP growth is above 6 percent in Bangladesh whereas it is around 3 percent in many other countries.

"Bangladesh works on the basis of reality. So, there is no reason to worry," he said. Momen arrived in Sylhet yesterday afternoon on a two-day tour.

Are we consuming tannery waste?

Smuggled from Savar industrial estate, solid waste being sold to poultry, fish feed factories

AKLAKUR RAHMAN AKASH, Savar

First, a gang smuggles solid wastes of leather (leftovers after cutting and trimming) from the Savar Tannery Industrial Estate. Then it sells them to poultry and fish feed producing factories around the country.

Later, the chicken and fish, consuming these wastes, end up on the plates of citizens.

You don't need to be a health expert to understand how such practices pose public health hazards.

During multiple visits to the tannery estate, this correspondent spoke to many officials, staffers and truck drivers. Most of them did not want to talk about the issue in detail, but they all more or less admitted to the fact that these solid wastes are indeed getting smuggled and being sold to animal feed producing factories.

But what's scarier is that this has been going on for a while.

The High Court in 2019 directed the government to immediately stop operation of poultry and fish feed factories across the country that use hazardous tannery waste for producing feed.



"A variety of chemicals, including chromium, are used to make animal feed from these wastes. These chemicals have the potential for deadly diseases, including cancer, in the human body," reads a Bangladesh Small and Cottage Industries Corporation (BSCIC) statement on the issue dating back to early this year.

Savar upazila livestock officer Dr Md Sajedul Islam also said use of tannery waste is completely prohibited in poultry industry. This waste carries heavy metals and hazardous chemicals that are harmful for health.

However, the smuggling of

tannery wastes continues to this date, although the authorities and police claim that they have a zero-tolerance policy in this regard.

The industrial area has 141 operational tanneries and one dedicated dumping station for solid waste, which is around six acres. They usually dump these solid wastes in a dedicated station and leave them there. According to officials, around 64,000 tonnes of solid waste is produced per year.

Staff and transport workers in the tannery estate alleged that the gang go to the estate's dumping stations late at night or early morning with trucks, then load it with solid tannery waste and leave the area.

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3 held with arms, ammo in Rajshahi

STAFF CORRESPONDENT,
Rajshahi

Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) claimed to have arrested three arms dealers with gun powder, bomb making materials, and seven firearms in Rajshahi.

The arrestees are Md Atiqur Rahman (35), and his associates -- Md Shahin Ali (25), and Md Shahidul (26). The seized items include 1.10kg gun powder, bomb-making splinters, four revolvers, three pistols, magazines, and bullets.

Rab-5 Commander Lt Col Riaz Shahriar said a Rab team raided Atiq's house in Kapasia Paharpur area and arrested the three. Atiq hid the materials near his poultry farm, he said. During interrogation, the arrestees revealed the names of two persons who provided them the arms and ammo.

A Rab investigation revealed that some anti-liberation elements have become active ahead of upcoming national elections, the Rab-5 commander said.

Two held over rape of Marma woman in Ctg

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Two people were arrested on charge of raping a 28-year-old woman from the Marma community in Chattogram's Rangunia upazila yesterday.

The arrestees are Mohammed Alamgir (28) and Jahangir Alam (30), said police.

The two were arrested early in the morning, Obaidul Islam, officer-in-charge (OC) of South Rangunia Police Station, told The Daily Star yesterday.

Quoting the case statement, the police official said the woman, a garment worker, left home on Thursday noon to go to her workplace in the port city.

When she was returning from work that day, three men intercepted her, forcibly took her to a nearby forest in Rangunia, and raped her.

Later that day, the victim went to the police station and filed a case against the three, the OC said.

Following the case, police arrested the two in Rangunia.

During primary interrogation, the two arrestees confessed to raping the woman, Obaidul mentioned.

"We produced the two before the court, which sent them to jail," he added.

The victim is undergoing treatment at Chattogram Medical College and Hospital, said the OC.

"We are trying to nab the absconding accused," he added.

Natore-Bogura highway, another name for suffering

BULBUL AHMED, Natore

The work to widen the busy Natore-Bogura highway was scheduled to be completed in December 2021. Later, it was extended to June 30, 2022.

But till date, only 50 percent of the work has been completed.

As a result, hundreds of people using the highway every day, which connects Khulna and Barishal with North Bengal, continue to suffer.

Tailbacks, potholes, dust flying around and vehicles getting dysfunctional have become a common scenario on the 62-km highway, of which 31km falls in Natore and the rest in Bogura.

Roads and Highways Department (RHD) sources said the work to increase the width of 6.3 kilometres of the highway from 18 feet to 34 feet started in June 2020.

Mir Habibul Islam Builders and Rana Builders got the contract for the project, which is worth Tk 81 crore. Besides, they were supposed to construct four lanes on 3.2 kilometres of the highway.

The estimated cost of the entire project is Tk 740 crore.

This isn't only a story about the slow progression of work.

Last year, an investigative officer of the

Police Bureau of Investigation framed charges against the contractors following a local court order on charges of cutting soil from the side of the road.

The trial of the court began at the court of additional chief judicial magistrate. However,



the contractors filed a revision appeal against it. The case was then dismissed by the court district and sessions judge.

Two sub-assistant engineers of RHD were also transferred over various allegations surrounding the project.

Ronen Roy, president of Sochetan Nagorik Committee Natore, said after the court took up the case, the contractor and RHD officials were left reeling. The work was stopped for a long time. After it restarted, it has been progressing at a snail's pace.

Supreme Court lawyer Shihab Uddin Khan said it was proved that they illegally cut soil. They should be punished.

Denying his involvement in anything illegal, contractor Mir Habibul Alam alias Bakhtiar claimed that the work is being delayed due to an increase in the price of construction materials. He added that he will apply for a time extension again.

Abdur Rahim, executive engineer of RHD in Natore, said, "People are suffering because the contractor did not complete the work on time. Therefore, I have recommended the project manager to cancel the contract with the contractors."

Md Sadekul Islam, director of Natore-Bogura highway widening project, said a letter has been sent to cancel the contracts.

Contacted, local lawmaker Zunaid Ahmed Palak, state minister for ICT, said, "The people are suffering because the road work is not done on time. RHD is also negligent. I will direct the chief engineer to cancel the contracts of the contractors concerned and blacklist them."

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